

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-12

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 195796

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, XD, US

SUBJ: US-UK TALKS ON SOUTH ASIA

1. SUMMARY: US AND UK DISCUSSIONS ON SOUTH ASIA
SEPTEMBER 25 REVEALED GENERAL IDENTITY OF VIEWS. BOTH
SIDES ENCOURAGED REGARDING PROGRESS TOWARD REGIONAL STA-
BILITY AND INDO-PAKISTAN-BANGLADESH MODUS VIVENDI.
CURRENT QUESTION MARK WAS UNCLEAR AND POTENTIALLY DE-
STABILIZING SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN. ACTING NEA
ASSISTANT SECRETARY DAVIES AND LAINGEN LED US SIDE WHILE
DEPUTY UNDERSECRETARY (ASIA) MICHAEL WILFORD AND SOUTH
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ASIA DEPT. HEAD GEORGE CHALMERS WERE UK PRINCIPALS.

AMBASSADORS BYROADE AND ELIOT ALSO PARTICIPATED. END

SUMMARY.

2. US AND UK AGREED THAT STABILITY WAS CATCH WORD FOR BOTH COUNTRIES' POLICIES TOWARD SOUTH ASIA. BOTH ENCOURAGED BY DESIRE FOR MODUS VIVENDI BETWEEN INDIA, PAKISTAN, AND BANGLADESH AND RELATIVELY OPTIMISTIC THAT PROGRESS, EVEN THOUGH SLOW, WOULD CONTINUE TO BE MADE. APPARENT SOVIET AND CHINESE INTEREST IN REGIONAL STABILITY WAS FURTHER ENCOURAGING ELEMENT. BRITISH BELIEVED THAT SOVIET INFLUENCE IN INDIA WAS VERY REAL ALTHOUGH PERHAPS NOT AS GREAT AS IN 1971. AT SAME TIME, BRITISH DID NOT THINK INDIANS LIKELY TO GO ALONG WITH SOVIET'S ASIAN SECURITY PROPOSAL. DURING RECENT VISIT TO LONDON,

P. N. HAKSAR, CHIEF INDIAN NEGOTIATOR FOR AUGUST 28 AGREEMENT, CHARACTERIZED THIS AS "PROPAGANDA PLOY" NOT TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY.

3. AFGHANISTAN - THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE DISCUSSION ABOUT THE UNCERTAIN SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN. BRITISH WERE DOUBTFUL THAT DAUD WOULD LAST IN POWER MORE THAN 6 TO 12 MONTHS, GIVEN TROUBLE HE WOULD HAVE IN FULFILLING CONFLICTING PROMISES MADE TO ARMY AND TO PUBLIC. BRITISH THOUGHT SOVIETS WERE URGING RESTRAINT ON PUSH-TUNISTAN ISSUE AND NOT INCLINED TO STIR UP TROUBLE. BRITS BELIEVED SOVIETS PROBABLY HAD SOME MEASURE OF FOREKNOWLEDGE OF DAUD COUP BUT DOUBT THEY ORGANIZED IT. BRITS INDICATED THAT DAUD HAD TOLD THEM THROUGH INTER-MEDIARIES HE HAD ACTED OUT OF PATRIOTIC DUTY AND FEAR THAT MILITARY WOULD COME UNDER SOVIET CONTROL UNLESS HE STEPPED IN TO LEAD COUP. WHILE SKEPTICAL OF THIS STORY, BRITS WERE CONTINUING BUSINESS AS USUAL POLICY IN AFGHANISTAN INCLUDING MODEST ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

4. US SIDE GAVE DAUD BETTER CHANCE OF SURVIVING, IF ONLY BECAUSE NO OTHER FIGURE SEEMED AVAILABLE. AT SAME TIME, RECENT ARRESTS HAD REMOVED NUMBER OF HIS CONSERVATIVE SUPPORTERS AND REDUCED HIS ROOM TO MANEUVER WITH YOUNGER, MILITARY ELEMENT. WE ALSO TROUBLED BY EMPHASIS CONFIDENTIAL

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DAUD PLACING ON PUSHTUNISTAN ISSUE, BUT UNCLEAR IF HE WAS PLANNING ANY ACTION OR SIMPLY USING THIS TO DIVERT ATTENTION WITHIN AND WITHOUT GOA FROM ITS CURRENT PROBLEMS. US SAID WE ALSO CONTINUING OUR AID PROGRAM, BUT HOLDING BACK ON SEVERAL PROJECTS IN PRE-PATORY STAGE UNTIL WE HAVE CLEARER IDEA OF WHERE AFGHANI-STAN HEADING.

5. WITH REGARD TO INDIAN ATTITUDE, BRITISH SAID THAT HAKSAR SAID INDIA WOULD BE TAKING FIRM LINE WITH NAIM DURING LATTER'S DELHI VISIT, URGING THAT DAUD REGIME NOT STIR UP PUSHTUNISTAN ISSUE. HAKSAR HAD EMPHASIZED THAT INDIA HAD SIZEABLE INVESTMENT IN BHUTTO AND REAL

STAKE IN INTEGRITY OF PAKISTAN. US SIDE COMMENTED THAT THIS VIEWPOINT SEEMED TO MARK SIGNIFICANT AND WELCOME SHIFT IN INDIAN ATTITUDE TOWARD PAKISTAN. WE NOTED THAT INDIANS WERE REACTING WITH RESTRAINT TO USE OF IRANIAN HELICOPTERS IN BALUCHISTAN. THEY ALSO TOOK RELAXED ATTITUDE TOWARD BHUTTO VISIT AND NOW GENERALLY SHOWED RESTRAINT IN DEALINGS WITH PAKS AND OTHER NEIGHBORS.

6. PAKISTAN - ON PAKISTAN, US SIDE REVIEWED BHUTTO VISIT: PAKISTAN PRIME MINISTER HAD BEST FOOT FORWARD, ACTING AS STATESMAN AND NOT SHOWING DISAPPOINTMENT OVER LACK OF CHANGE IN US ARMS SUPPLY POLICY. HE SHOWED LESS ANTI-INDIAN ANIMOSITY THAN IN PAST AND EXPRESSED CLEAR DESIRE TO MAINTAIN SIMLA PROCESS. BRITS SAID THAT THEY NOW IN PROCESS OF TRYING TO IMPROVE THEIR RELATIONS WITH PAKISTAN. RECENTLY, THEY HAD EASED UP ON MILITARY SALES AND WERE PLEASED THAT INDIANS WERE TAKING RELAXED VIEW OF PAK PURCHASE OF BRITISH FRIGATES. WE COMMENTED THAT INDIANS SEEMED SATISFIED WITH PRESENT US ARMS STANCE, NOTING THAT PRESS REACTION IN INDIA TO BHUTTO VISIT HAD MADE MUCH OF OUR MAINTAINING POLICY.

7. ON PAK INTERNAL SCENE, BRITISH WERE CONCERNED, ESPECIALLY GIVEN AFGHANISTAN SITUATION, THAT BHUTTO WAS ASKING FOR TROUBLE IF HE CONTINUED TO SIT ON BALUCHISTAN AND OPTED FOR SIMILAR HARD LINE POLICY IN NWFP. US SIDE STATED THAT WHILE BHUTTO HAD DISTASTE
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FOR OPPOSITION, HE HAD SHOWN HIMSELF AGILE AND RESPONSIBLE LEADER IN THE LAST 22 MONTHS AND SO FAR HAD ALWAYS STOPPED SHORT OF BRINK WITH OPPONENTS LIKE WALI KHAN.

8. BANGLADESH - ON BANGLADESH, BRITS AND WE AGREED THAT MUJIB'S LEADERSHIP WAS WEAK AND THAT HIS GOVERNMENT HAD POOR RECORD IN MAKING ECONOMIC POLICY DECISIONS. BRITS COMMENTED ON POTENTIAL FOR TROUBLE BETWEEN INDIA AND BANGLADESH AND HAD IMPRESSION THAT INDIANS PLANNING TO TAKE MORE STANDOFFISH ATTITUDE ONCE DELHI ABLE TO GET OUT OF BETWEEN BANGLADESH AND PAKISTAN ON POWS AND OTHER RELATED QUESTIONS. BOTH WE AND UK AGREED THAT CHINESE WERE INTERESTED IN EXTENDING INFLUENCE IN BANGLADESH, BUT WOULD NOT MAKE MOVE UNTIL AFTER PAKISTAN RECOGNIZED DACCA.

9. INDIA - ON INDIA US SAID THAT ECONOMIC OUTLOOK APPEARED DIM. MRS. GANDHI SEEMED PRISONER OF LEFTIST SLOGANS AND THERE NO STRONG INDICATIONS THAT USEFUL ECONOMIC POLICY CHANGES IN WIND. BRITISH AGREED BUT ADDED THAT HAKSAR HAD MADE CONSIDERABLE POINT IN LONDON REGARDING POSSIBLE REORGANIZATION OF PRESENT INDIAN

STATES INTO AS MANY AS 40 SMALLER UNITS AS WAY TO PROVIDE MORE EFFECTIVE ADMINISTRATION. HAKSAR EMPHASIZED THIS WOULD BE MAJOR DOMESTIC INITIATIVE. ON ARMS POLICY, BRITISH SAID INDIANS WERE APPARENTLY LOOKING TO THEM AS ALTERNATIVE SOURCES TO SOVIETS FOR SOPHISTICATED ITEMS. THIS WAS FINE WITH BRITS EXCEPT FOR PROBLEMS ABOUT SELLING INDIA CERTAIN TYPES OF HIGHLY CLASSIFIED EQUIPMENT.

10. BRITS INDICATED THAT PRIME MINISTER HEATH HAD EXCELLENT RELATIONSHIP WITH MRS. GANDHI AND ANGLO-INDIAN TIES SEEMED TO BE IN VERY GOOD SHAPE. US SIDE SAID THAT WE NOW-ENGAGED IN SERIOUS DIALOGUE AND WERE MAKING GRADUAL PROGRESS IN DEVELOPING BETTER RELATIONSHIP, NOTING CURRENT RUPEE NEGOTIATIONS AND POSSIBILITY TRADE/INVESTMENT AND AID TALKS.

11. NARCOTICS - US ALSO REVIEWED CURRENT EFFORTS TO IMPROVE NARCOTICS CONTROLS IN AFGHANISTAN, PAKISTAN AND CONFIDENTIAL

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INDIA. WHILE DAUD REGIME HAD VETOED PLANNED UN INITIATIVE, WE REMAINED HOPEFUL THAT HE WOULD COOPERATE IN CONTROL PROGRAM. BRITISH INDICATED THEIR WILLINGNESS TO DEVOTE PART OF THEIR AID PROGRAM IN AFGHANISTAN TO PROVIDE NECESSARY TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE. IN PAKISTAN, BHUTTO HAD RESPONDED POSITIVELY TO US PROPOSALS AND WE WERE OPTIMISTIC THAT GOP WOULD ADOPT POLICY OF GRADUAL PHASE-OUT OF POPPY CULTIVATION. BRITISH COMMENTED THAT IN VIEW OF NATURE OF PAKISTAN-BRITISH RELATIONSHIP THEY DID NOT SEE USEFUL ROLE FOR THEM IN NARCOTICS AREA. IN INDIA, WE NOTED THAT THERE WERE EXCELLENT RELATIONSHIPS AT WORKING LEVEL DESPITE INDIAN SENSITIVITIES. HOWEVER, WE CONTINUED TO BE WORRIED ABOUT LEAKAGES IN INDIAN CONTROL SYSTEM. WE ALSO MENTIONED THAT POSSIBLE SHORTAGE OF LICIT OPIUM WAS WORRYING US PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY AND THERE WAS INTEREST IN ASSURING ADEQUATE FLOW FROM INDIA, THE MAJOR SOURCE.

12. SEPTTEL HAS REPORTED ON SRI LANKA. KISSINGER

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